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Book Reviews

Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, and Magic by Kenneth Gross. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. Pp. 271. \$24.95.

"Idolatry" and "Iconoclasm" name the dialectic that informs the analysis in this undeniably intelligent study of Spenser; magic, "the third key word of this book's very un-dialectical subtitle" is "something of a surd," Gross tells his reader; "the term may indeed sound unusually anomalous in what I tend to think of as a skeptical and de-idealizing approach to Spenser" (p. 22). Not, of course, because magic is incapable of being produced dialectically (false/true, black/white) but rather, given a text which makes just those kinds of distinctions difficult to maintain, magic translates into poetry, recouping with it (however tainted the term may be) an object of faith, an ideal. "'Magic' in this sense is no escape clause but an attempt to name what is most difficult, mysterious, and necessary in Spenser's romance" (p. 24), so Gross concludes his "Introduction." There are many other terms that might be used in its stead—"metaphor," "language," "love," or "miracle" come to Gross's mind.

As the relationship between his dialectical terms and their surd partner might begin to suggest, Gross's study confronts and enacts ambivalence. At its best, it is aware of the numerous ways in which attachment to an image is both fostered and defeated in the Spenserian text, aware equally that an attachment to the destruction of finality may be as fetishistic as worship of the idol. "To break an image is not necessarily to break away from an image" (p. 11) is almost the opening aphorism of this study, studded with such telling phrases; the point, indeed, is made throughout the book, nowhere more stunningly than in a reading of the Blatant Beast along with Freud's death instinct, and as a version of the poet at his most iconoclastic, defiling his own signifiers. Thus, the initial chapter on *The Faerie Queene* compares Orgoglio and Arthur, troubling distinctions between iconoclasm and icon, finally by reading Arthur's shield as "an allegory that slays allegory" (p. 143); similarly, if conversely, of the Cupid worshipped in the House of Busyrane, Gross writes, "the blind god blinds" (p. 161) as he pursues moments in the career of Britomart, from the mirror stage to breaking in to Busyrane's, to her invasion by the vision in Isis Church. "Idols of the Quest" is the name of the chapter, and subsequent ones explore the Garden of Adonis as the sole location of the poem to escape the dialectic which Gross finds again in the final books, in Colin and Calidore's interrupted vision of the Graces or in Faunus' sight of the goddess. "Faunus is a form of the poet at his most exuberant and ambivalent, a figure mocked and mocking, idolatrous and iconoclastic" (p. 244) is almost the last word of the book: still mapping the territory of an ambivalent dialectic in readings of an anthology of Spenserian high-points.

"A form of the poet": the phrase suggests the ambivalence that informs Gross's procedures. "The poet" is the magical talisman of Gross's text, his way of recouping everything that might be lost by assenting fully to the "de-idealizing" procedures that will not allow any image more than imaginary status. Candidly, closing the chapter on the Garden of Adonis ("Eden without Idols"), Gross admits a reader's objections: "A reader of an earlier draft

of this chapter tells me that so grand a Garden must do more than conceal questions about language and metaphor" (p. 208). Like the poet he describes, Gross defends against this by, at one and the same time, insisting that it as a misreading and by insisting on his reading: "Especially given the poet's situation as a latecomer in a long tradition of mythmaking, as one who is thus more disenchanted even in his most extravagant idealisms, Spenser needs the Garden to explore . . . questions about the temporal sources and burdens of poetry . . ." (pp. 208-9). Or, at any rate, Gross needs such a Garden. The identification between authors is nowhere closer, save perhaps at the end of the chapter on Britomart's quest, where "the text somehow steals from us any single figure or frame of value" (p. 179), leaving its readers in a place where obsession goes no further than ambivalence, a place where there are only questions whose answers seem to have already been asked and denied an answer. "Such questions are not simple to ask, nor can they be answered here, unless they have been answered already. If they are for the moment sufficient in themselves, it is because they throw more radically in doubt our own interpretive unfoldings of doubt, our own fetishizings of ambiguity and ambivalence. Yet having posed these questions, I find that what I really want to know is whether they could be Spenser's questions as well as my own" (p. 180). The narcissistic text insists on its critical reproduction.

I have been letting Gross speak for himself to allow his critical voice to appear. That the muse of this book is the Angus Fletcher of *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*—"Fletcher, a crucial theorist of literary ambivalence" (p. 158)—is no doubt apparent; that it is Harold Bloom's Fletcher is perhaps equally clear (from the dialectic, the defenses, the belatedness). "Such an intersection of the natural and cultural can only be cured by a severe, antithetical disjunction" (p. 101), Gross writes of the dismantling of the Bower of Bliss; the vocabulary of the analysis could be replicated by numerous citations from his text. Thus, at many insightful moments, Gross steels himself to "the more strenuous dislocation of close reading" (p. 240); elsewhere he offers the aphorisms, the identifications of what he refers to as his "intuitions": Bloomian acts in which the critic vies with the poetic text to grasp the laurels of sensitivity, recalling, for example, "with a slight shudder" (p. 93) that Archimago, as "a magus or idol of the *arche*" throws the ideal image-maker into question; stopping himself in order to "hover at length over the peculiar figurative stresses" (p. 131) in stanzas about Prince Arthur; finding such 'strenuous' and 'severe' encounters with the text "chilling": "It is no doubt chilling to find that after all attempts to clear away illusion, one's type of transcendent revelation is an image of contagious fascination in which the opacities of imagination, divine vision, and idolatry are hardly separable. But such a discovery is liberating as well, almost a form of the sublime" (p. 143). As the prose might suggest, Gross yearns for adjectives he so generously supplies to the other critics "constellate[d]" (p. 21) in his text; if not "crucial," he would perhaps be pleased to find himself introduced as he introduces an insight of Isabel Rathborne's: "it may be true, as Isabel E. Rathborne has so beautifully argued . . ." (p. 123).

Gross opens his book with a pair of dialectical, antithetical chapters, one on "A Poetics of Idolatry," which he characterizes as "ahistorical" and "speculative," and a second on *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, meant to

"delay" the approach to *The Faerie Queene* by insisting on "historical circumstances" and the "cultural climate" (p. 78). Enacting his own version of the "unsettling" that characterizes Spenser, Gross also performs the "magic" that will always recoup [Gross's] Spenser ("the poet"). The chapter on poetics, ranging from the Bible to Vico, Augustine to Buber, the Medusa to the Golem, Calvin, Petrarch, Luther, Aquinas, Tyndale, Shakespeare, Bruno, Cervantes (in an order no more apparent than the list I have just produced from memory), enacts Gross's quest; and his trip to Hibernia only confirms it, reading Spenser's treatise not as a "troubler" to his poetics (this will also be the lesson of Gross's Garden), but an example of "the mythopoesis of everyday life" (p. 106)—a rewriting of Spenser and Freud that sums up in a phrase the project of this study. "I want to read in the Garden of Adonis the fable of a splendid and splendidly sublimated narcissism" (p. 200), and the desire, once named, it magically fulfilled. This is a reading that wants to face and efface its "de-idealizing" tendencies, to turn scepticism into a faith that can only be maintained by making life a poem and imagination the only locale worth habiting. Gross terms this a "Romantic" appropriation of Spenser (p. 10), but it is—as the invocations of Ruskin might suggest (or the comparisons to Longfellow at one point, or, indeed, even in the citations of lines from Romantic poetry)—late Victorian, Edwardian in its sensibility, in its prophetic pose. Undeniably, readers who want readings of moments from Spenser, unmoored from narrative in *The Faerie Queene*, untouched by questions of history or ideology, will find this book illuminating. Indeed, within such confines, this is as fine a book on Spenser as anyone has written. Reading it is like being within "a box where sweets compacted lie."

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The Social Vision of William Blake by Michael Ferber. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. Pp. xii + 254. \$29.50.

"Are not Religion and Politics the Same Thing? Brotherhood is Religion," notes Blake in *Jerusalem*. *The Social Vision of William Blake* can be read as a gloss on these lines, which Michael Ferber claims provided the original impetus for this excellent study. Ferber integrates two of his major concerns, "the politics of spiritual fraternity" and the concept of ideology, into a coherent analysis of topics not often discussed in Blake studies. Ferber avoids, as he says, "another restatement of all [Blake's] ideas and systematic symbolism, a vice that still swells so many new Blake books" (p. 116). Instead relying on the "greatest hits" of Blake, he finds his textual evidence in the less often discussed passages of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. *The Social Vision* is filled with insights about both minute particulars in Blake and their informing socio-historical context. Ferber's historical and social emphasis, which instances the current "return of history" in literary criticism, is also marked by a moral dimension, seen in his view of Blake as "a phenomenologist of liberation" (p. 112). Ferber emphasizes the poet's "relevance to our own time": "Blake can make an essential contribution to the vision and program we need in order to reconstruct the damaged societies of our world" (pp. 58, 6).

While careful not to reduce Blake's complexities, he suggests that Blake fits into the line of radical inner light Christianity on the one hand, and into the tradition of Marxist social critics that culminated in the Frankfurt School on the other. In examining the "social basis of the ideological space Blake occupies," Ferber acknowledges the strength of his own predecessors (notably David Erdman), but urges a "multiplanar organizing interpretation to situate" Blake's minute particulars (pp. 34, 5). Ferber begins with a general overview of the concept of ideology and its place in literary studies. Sensitive to the over-extension that the term has suffered in recent discussions, he carefully defines ideology as "a set of related ideas, images, and values more or less distorted from the 'truth.'" Without lapsing into naïveté, he prefers to retain a metaphysical dimension rather than adopting the totalizing view of ideology of such thinkers as Althusser. Blake's ideology in particular comprises the subject of the second and longest chapter, which skillfully considers a wide range of topics. Ferber relates Blake to eighteenth-century political and social thought, to seventeenth-century Protestant dissent, and to the tradition of artisanal dissent. He locates in Blake a "scanning of origins and precedents," what he calls "left antiquarianism," of which he claims *The Social Vision* is also an example (p. 49). This ambitious chapter also serves to introduce the topics of the next six chapters: "Brotherhood," "Nature and the Female," "Liberty," "Labor," "Time, Eternity, and History," and finally "Blake's *Apocastasis*," all of which "bring out the social and political bearings" of their subjects. In the fifth chapter, "Liberty," Ferber attributes Blake's categories of excess to antinomianism, in the most thorough and insightful discussion on the topic to date.

The reader skeptical of politically engaged criticism is relieved by Ferber's acknowledgement that ideological analysis "is not the master key to Blake," nor does it "exhaust the meaning or value of Blake's social and political vision." Ferber does not allow his governing theoretical premises to delimit his analysis; he manages instead to open up his subject in the Blakean spirit of expanding vision that values ambiguity, complexity and seeming contradictions. Ferber views Blake's difficulty as intentionally subversive of the reigning ideology ("To work hard at understanding anything having to do with society, morality, or religion is to prompt subversive thoughts" [p. 64]), and as connected to the value of hard work. Ferber applauds Blake's "vision of redeemed labor" (p. 150): "We who are set at work on it are meant to find in our diligent toil and growing mastery a paradigm of what all labor ought to be" (p. 151). Avoiding the tendency to "view a small portion & think that all," Ferber confronts Blakean complexity by fashioning a heterodox methodology: taking the "young Marx with [the] old, absorb[ing] Weber and Freud," paying attention to criticism of Marxism, while sustaining a "love of literature" (p. 3). Throughout Ferber refuses the "witting or unwitting concealment" (p. 45) of his opening gesture of privileging the category of ideology to mediate "between social history and literary or aesthetic meaning" (p. xi). Ferber's self-consciousness on this matter will be appreciated by those readers who have encountered the recent unfortunate attempt at a Marxist approach to Blake—Stewart Crehan's *Blake in Context*.

Ferber shows us a Blake who is at once "socially engaged and politically independent" (p. 175), a position most vividly evident in Ferber's excellent dis-

discussion of Blake's seemingly eccentric attitude toward Locke. Ferber traces various English and American leftist attitudes toward Locke's politics; although Blake's hostility is at least explicitly directed toward Locke's epistemology, Blake would, as an eighteenth-century man, have seen the connection between "matters of fact and matters of value" (p. 16). Blake saw the danger of certain ambiguities in Locke, which E. P. Thompson claims, "fall into two halves, one Burke, the other Paine" (p. 15). Yet Ferber's discussion might have been even more effective without over reliance on Staughton Lynd's *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism*, especially since it is a work widely criticized among historians, including Christopher Lasch and John Patrick Diggins.

Ideology critique is a successful mode of explanation in *The Social Vision* and nowhere more so than in the provocative discussion of nature in the second and fourth chapters ("Blake's Ideology" and "Nature and the Female"). Ferber attempts to make sense of Blake's "scandalous contempt" for nature by revealing the ideological content of such an attitude, its status as a socio-historical conceptualization of nature at work in his culture. Blake's contempt served to distinguish "his thinking from normal discourse lets it become contaminated and subverted" (p. 99). Blake, in Ferber's view, anticipates what the Frankfurt School called the "dialectic of Enlightenment": man's domination over nature entails his domination over himself. For Blake, such domination occurs when nature is perceived as separate from and outside of man. Ferber contends that Blake denies the reality of the natural world in order "to deny it to the epistemologies and moralities" of the "British empiricists' priesthood" (p. 47). And he connects the human centeredness of nature to Blake's own artistic labors: "What a life long concentration on producing things has told Blake is that man has made everything and that nothing is 'given'; even 'nature,' as an external datum, is an illusory space betokening only the failure to express human culture" (p. 56). This is an especially suggestive formulation because it opens up a needed discussion about the connection between Blake's artistic medium and his cultural critique. Like William Godwin, Blake saw the danger of accepting "everything as natural and right that happens"; such acceptance allows nature to function "in silencing further inquiry into the way things really are" (p. 96)—it "sanctifies the existing social order by placing it beyond human control" (p. 95). Blake, like Lukács, invoked nature as "a social category" (p. 98), says Ferber, who might have quoted Marshall Sahlins in *Culture and Practical Reason*, who puts it in a more Blakean way: "No object, no thing, has being or movement in human society except by the significance men can give it." While Ferber is to be commended for his reading of Nature in Blake, this subject needs even more discussion. The importance of Blake's contempt for nature cannot be overemphasized; indeed, one could argue that it is the key to his epistemology and the basis of his cultural critique. Ferber's discussion makes a good beginning for such a reorientation.

Ferber reveals in Blake's rejection of nature what could be called a version of antifoundationalism; Blake rejects various attempts to locate a privileged space ("nature" would be just one example) of evaluation. But Blake himself privileges the Creative Imagination, in Ferber's words, an "inborn intellectual and spiritual power" (p. 24). Ferber convincingly explains the motivation be-

hind Blake's objection to systems that depend on such a "space," but he is uncritical of Blake's own privileging of Imagination. The inconsistency of Blake's thought on this topic is duplicated in Ferber's own analysis—perhaps an instance of what Jerome McGann has called Romantic scholarship's "uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations." It's difficult to imagine that Blake would have been unaware of the problem of radicalizing his critique to such an extent that it "begins to undermine even its own foundations." Perhaps Blake was cognizant of the "paradoxical self-referentiality" of his critique, but chose to ignore it. Habermas, whom I've just quoted, objects to the ethical relativism of any philosophy that attempts a totalizing critique, and he offers a striking contemporary analogue to Blake's position. In effect, to avoid an ethical impasse (such as Habermas finds in Derrida and Foucault), Blake defies his own strictures and privileges the Creative Imagination. In the spirit of his anti-systematizing, Blake would have valued the usefulness of his move over its consistency. If this is a fair assessment of Blake's intention, perhaps I am only noting Ferber's tacit approval of Blake's move, though one would welcome more explicitness on this point.

Ferber, though, is ready when necessary to criticize Blake. For instance, like many readers, Ferber finds "Blake's seeming antifeminism" troublesome; critics have attempted to rescue Blake, Ferber notes, by pointing out that "Blake's female figures are [often] symbols of mental states, male or female," and that he "was not exactly a male-supremacist, just the child of his time making use of traditional symbolism" (p. 92). It is unfortunate, however, that Blake wasn't more critical of that tradition. Ferber, though, warns against reconstructing a "correct" Blake, a Blake "too sanitized to be quite the ornery eccentric we also know him to be" (p. 92), though some of his "malodorous opinions" (p. 92) become less so when considered in their socio-historical context. This is an important point: to lose the eccentric Blake, to explain away his "incorrect" opinions would be a great mistake.

Ironically, despite his admirable and careful self-reflection, even Ferber domesticates Blake, but the poet's attachment to excess and difficulty bursts the confines of ideological analysis. Ferber's Blake, social in his striving to redeem humankind in the spirit of fraternity and liberty, if hesitant about equality, is a very real Blake, though an incomplete one. But how social is the Blake who applauded excess and desire, who warned against restraint and compromise and who, as Ferber notes, because of his isolation must have had a weak "sense of belonging to a habitable public space" (p. 159)? Because of what Ferber sees as Blake's insistence throughout on "absolute convictions about human solidarity and brotherhood" (p. 159), he won't face the possibility that Blake's anti-social attitudes were deliberate. To avoid accommodating Blake's visions of excess too neatly to a committed social position, one need only remember that, to him, "Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of genius."

The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867 by Catherine Gallagher. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Pp. xv + 320. \$25.00.

Catherine Gallagher's book, while it keeps its theoretical underpinnings modestly in the background, is one of the finest studies of Victorian fiction to come out of the recent movement towards a discourse-oriented "new historicism," though it does share some of the problems inherent in any attempt to relegate ideology (or, for that matter, material history) to a secondary role in the transformation of narrative structures. The central argument of the book is that narrative fiction underwent fundamental changes as it intersected the discourse of industrialism—by which Gallagher means the set of controversies often referred to as the "Condition of England Debate." Gallagher characterizes three basic controversies sustained by this discourse: arguments about free will and determinism, about the relationship between families and society, and about the way in which social facts are related to values. She claims that industrial fiction, as it sorts through these controversies, expresses contradictions inherent in the larger field of social discourse. Though she does not formulate a specific role for narrative within this discourse, nevertheless her discussions show how industrial fiction reveals the irresolvable tensions that shaped Victorian thinking about social change, and how apparent "flaws" in the novels reflect such tensions. But perhaps the most interesting and innovative idea in the book is her claim that the pressure these contradictory tensions exerted on the evolution of the novel induced writers to project an independent realm of representation, and to develop more elaborate modes of formal self-consciousness. Gallagher thus demonstrates how the particular way in which social questions were represented in Victorian fiction led directly and inexorably to modernism's preoccupation with aesthetic autonomy.

Gallagher's three controversies themselves may not surprise anyone, but she illuminates them by emphasizing the interdependence of categories of Victorian social thought normally assumed to express discrete, or at least self-consistent meanings: the family, Providence, free moral will. Her focus on discursive dynamics gives her great leverage on the structural adjustments and the evasions of the industrial novel, as well as many excellent opportunities to draw connections between issues formulated by Victorian prose writers and by novelists. She is impressive, for example, on the conflict that arises between theories of social determinism crucial to several strains of reformist thought and the traditional English novel's claims for moral freedom. She articulates the difficulties industrial fiction encounters trying to formulate psychological and social preconditions for moral action, and shows convincingly how the novels embody these contradictions not only in a formal conflict between plot and character, but in various kinds of psychological struggle. This enables her to place writers like Hannah Moore, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Harriet Martineau and others on a scale somewhere between Owenite (determinist) and Coleridgean (free will) positions, though Gallagher always demonstrates how industrial narratives cannot achieve coherence, and how they end by exposing the contradictory structure of the free will/determinism debate. Gallagher's readings of individual texts support

these general ideas in subtle and refreshing ways. She is particularly instructive about the way in which *Mary Barton* unravels formally, dispersing its theme into multiple narrative modes, and about the unraveling of the narrator himself in *Alton Locke*, which she shows to proceed directly from Kingsley's ambivalence about causation. Gallagher is also impressive on her second controversy: on the pressure to associate family life and society in some ameliorative relationship, and the equally compelling necessity of dissociating them, finally, as a precondition for defining the family as a space of value. While trying to reform the split between family and society in a way that would take advantage of the family's potential for constructive influence, Gallagher argues, novelists regularly reproduced the very split they tried to overcome. Gallagher shows how this double bind is played out in structural tensions within the novels, but she is also good on the more specific hesitations of individual writers. She shows, for example, in an excellent discussion of *Hard Times*, how Dickens translates social problems into familial ones, and finally concentrates on family reform (in the Gradgrind plot) as a preliminary necessity for social reform (in the Blackpool-Bounderby plot), only to remain suspicious about relationships in general, and to find family life so tenuous and fragile as to render it hopeless as a model for social transformation.

The most interesting part of the book, though, is the section on the debate over facts and values. Here, Gallagher develops a persuasive analysis of the way that arguments about facts and values have caused theorists since Coleridge to link politics with reading and writing through the question of representation. For Victorian arguments about representation divide proponents of either limited political representation or universal suffrage along the same fault lines that they divide writers like Harriet Martineau, who practiced a selective realism, from writers like George Eliot, who subscribed to an accumulative (or what Gallagher calls metonymic) realism, in which the significance of all facts guarantees that value will be produced through their agglomeration. According to Gallagher, both positions deteriorated gradually over the course of the century. While some writers began to desert models in which representation is seen as symbolic—a theory held most prominently by Coleridge, but critiqued very strongly by Carlyle and others who saw symbolic representation betrayed by the tendency of all symbols to become ironic—others grew disenchanted with the inevitable mediocrity of models of descriptive representation that affirm the value of all social facts (or actors)—models articulated originally by Bentham and the Utilitarians. But Gallagher goes on to demonstrate how an alternative conception of culture developed by J. S. Mill and extended by Matthew Arnold and others attempts to escape both descriptive representation and symbolic representation by basing politics and culture on each other. Political and cultural ideals come to reverberate in *Culture and Anarchy*—or in the later novels of George Eliot—in a way that makes culture and politics interdependent, indicating only each other within an autonomous realm of representations. Gallagher exposes this shift brilliantly in *Felix Holt*, showing how Felix himself is opposed both to religious theories of value (in Rufous Lyon) and to the claims of social conditions and status (in Esther), and how he eventually represents a pure but empty domain of values that is explicitly displayed as unreadable and unworldly. In this way, the act of representation comes to be substituted for the

objects of representation, both in political and cultural terms. Gallagher shows, finally, how this is an essentially conservative gesture, how it empties out the social realm in order to preserve it.

The conclusion that Gallagher attaches to this discussion may seem premature, however. For Gallagher argues that the discourse characteristic of *laissez-faire* capitalism was abruptly "swept away" by the critique implicit in "Arnoldian" cultural politics, and that the discourse of industrialism became out-dated in conjunction with the development of the discourse of cultural politics. It seems more accurate and more obvious to say that the various problems Gallagher traces have been carried on in debates—however skewed—whose resemblance to Victorian social discourse is unmistakable. Perhaps, if she had noted the ways in which political issues have been displaced into the very fabric of nineteenth and twentieth-century subjectivity, she would not have emphasized this distinction between Victorian thought and cultural politics so heavily. It also seems imperative to say that the concept of cultural politics itself opened up a tremendous gap in our ability to perceive the connections between literary discourse and the realm of social, political, and economic discourse.

In general, by grounding history in discourse, and by leaning on some kind of tacit homology between social and literary discourse, Gallagher has fallen into the trap—familiar in many contemporary theories of history—of collapsing important differences between writers, audiences, politics, economics, and material life into a kind of cultural totality. Her tendency to employ a monolithic theory of discourse surfaces throughout the book, though Gallagher minimizes the damage by muting her large claims. Nevertheless, one might debate the neat and purely discursive chronology that Gallagher quietly assigns to her three controversies: that novelists of the 1850s escaped from free will/determinism questions by writing instead about the controversy over private/public life, and that novelists of the 1860s escaped private/public contradictions by inventing cultural politics out of the facts/values debate. A related problem is the static quality that Gallagher's book takes on by seeming to rest in the triumphant discovery of discursive contradictions. Her argument has a predictable and repetitive cast, as it seems to circle around the same discursive problems and to name the same simple failures of resolution. More importantly, the finality of her case about contradictions deprives Gallagher of ways to explain the relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness of specific arguments about these controversies, as she tends instead toward an eerily anti-materialist rationale for social and cultural change, which lifts the dynamics of discursive social power out of the control, supposedly, of any and all interest groups.

For all the new insight generated by Gallagher's discourse model, too, her book revolves finally on some surprisingly small claims about the category of industrial fiction itself. One of the basic and unfronted problems in the book is Gallagher's assertion that the narrative irresolutions she finds are rooted primarily in the debate over industrialism. All of these controversies have long, complicated histories—as Gallagher often acknowledges, but without making it clear what weight we should assign to the many other kinds of pressure that shaped them (i.e., post-Enlightenment secularism, the collapse of Chartism, imperialist expansion, the invention of psychoanalysis,

patterns of sexual differentiation, or the material transformations brought about by industrialism itself). Gallagher claims instead that the pivotal concerns of industrial discourse, as she articulates them, are explicitly thematized in industrial fiction, and that the thematic emphasis is what characterizes the genre. This claim hardly seems to define the uniqueness of such fiction. Is industrial fiction really different from Victorian or Edwardian domestic fiction (or from *Paradise Lost*) because it thematizes the (irresolvable) question of free will? Is it distinct from the novels of Richardson because it thematizes problematic relations between family and society? One wonders if the category of "industrial" fiction itself might be ill-conceived, or at least a regrettable importation from more traditional ways of defining literary history.

Despite its flaws, however—many of which, admittedly, should be placed in the context of continued methodological debate—Catherine Gallagher has written a work that will be essential to further study of Victorian fiction, and that will be much valued by anyone interested in the relationship between literature and society.

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John Kucich

Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality by John Maynard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. 262. \$29.95.

John Maynard has taken as his specific task the reconstruction of Victorian sexual attitudes, with a special focus upon the complete works of Charlotte Brontë. This is a remarkably sensible and cogent study of an author about whom much nonsense has been written. In this closely written book, Maynard argues that Brontë "creates a vision of sexual experience that can rival that of any of her successors in the twentieth century for depth of psychological insight and fidelity to the protean and complex nature of sexuality itself" (p. 6). Maynard is refreshingly free from any particular psychological interpretation of the Brontës; rather, he concentrates on a full examination of the language of sexual desire Charlotte Brontë developed in the complete corpus of her writing, from her juvenilia to her masterpiece, *Villette*. An appendix, based upon modern medical interpretations, argues—not altogether convincingly—that Brontë died not from hyperemesis gravidarum (excessive sickness in early pregnancy) but from tuberculosis. (The appendix is consonant with Maynard's overall argument that Brontë accepted and enjoyed all aspects of sexuality).

Maynard has little patience with those modern critics who have interpreted Brontë's life as a series of psychological maimings, or as a search for death and defeat; rather, he points to her healthy belief in the centrality of sexual experience in adult life. For him Brontë's literary output reflects her lifelong effort to delineate the complications of sexual desire. The most interesting part of passion for her was the period leading up to fulfillment, for it enabled her to explore the fluctuations of feeling, doubt and desire that impel a man and woman toward each other. Maynard praises, for example, Brontë's ability to render both the presence and absence of gratification in the passionate

relationship of Lucy Snowe and M. Paul in *Villette*. He finds the ending of this novel to be satisfactory in spite of the failure to consummate the love affair, because Brontë believes that "being able to risk strong feeling may be finally the most important thing, whether the feeling itself prove fruitful or barren" (p. 214).

Maynard is especially astute in his dissection of the quantities of Brontë juvenilia. He points out, for example, the long apprenticeship Brontë served in writing both by herself and in collaboration with her brother Branwell. The Angrian saga, starring the increasingly complex Byronic hero, Zamorna, gave her an opportunity to explore sexual desire unfettered by the demands of publication. Long before she had published *Jane Eyre*, with its sexually experienced hero, Brontë had fully explored a variety of sexual temptations in the Angrian adventures. Maynard usefully reminds us that Brontë does not pit desire against morality, but rather creates a variety of situations in which sexual attraction can be explored.

Maynard's close analysis of each of the novels yields a number of fresh insights. He notes, for example, how needy Rochester is for Jane's love: "Like Samson, he is capable in many ways of being trammelled, for good or bad, by a woman. Unlike Samson, his strength really only exists in relation to a woman, not to God or abstract principles" (p. 113). Perhaps Maynard's greatest service in his chapter on *Jane Eyre* is his reinterpretation of the ending. Freudian critics have long seen the blinding and maiming of Rochester to be a symbolic castration by a fearful Brontë. Maynard argues that Rochester, unlike Samson, has been shorn but not scalped, suffering a blow to his arrogance and dishonesty toward Jane, rather than actual impotence or the loss of love. Jane, in turn, he notes, returns to Rochester when she hears his call without a moral qualm; she approaches Thornfield without knowing whether he is still married, simply saying, "Who could be hurt by my once more tasting the life his glance can give me?" (quoted on p. 140). Critics of *Jane Eyre* have claimed that we must always see the other characters in the novel through Jane's moral vision, but Maynard points out how she has misinterpreted Rochester's sexual energy, assuming that he risks either insanity or profligacy when she leaves him; he falls into neither, and is therefore morally ready to accept Jane's love at the end of the novel. Maynard supplies a valuable correction to those who confuse Jane with Brontë herself.

Maynard is especially praiseworthy for his effort to clear away the layers of modern psychology that have covered the Brontë corpus. His judgments of specific novels, including the unpublished novellas written just before *The Professor* and *Jane Eyre*, are always convincing. But occasionally, in his effort to defend Brontë, Maynard is too ready to attack "society" as the enemy of her explorations of sexual issues. Thus, boarding schools are invariably punitive prisons for sexually curious girls. Brontë was miserable as a teacher away from her home; her own comments about boarding school life need to be evaluated accordingly. Maynard also seems a bit too ready to accept Tom Winnifrith's judgment that *Jane Eyre* was severely criticized by contemporaries; Miriam Allott's work indicates that it is equally possible to prove the contrary. The overall picture of Victorian society that emerges, in spite of Maynard's sensitive interpretation of the language of Victorian sexuality, is that old stereotype of repression and hypocrisy. Maynard is on firmer ground

when he analyzes the limitations of Brontë's social sensibility and her inability, for example, to understand the urbane humor of her idol Thackeray. Here he is able to show the subtle relationship between an outward life of the severest rectitude and an imaginative life of the greatest freedom.

This is a book of many excellences, and to be praised for its thorough reinterpretation of the sexual language of Brontë's fiction. If I consider it less successful in its analysis of Victorian sexual mores, it is in part because the thorough-going reassessment of this area of nineteenth-century life has only just begun. *Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality* is one of the best books to appear in recent years on Brontë; every Victorianist will find it important reading.

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Martha Vicinus

Henry James: The Writer and His Work by Tony Tanner. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985. Pp. x + 142. \$17.50.

The autumn of 1985 would seem to have been a time of particular compression in Henry James studies. Leon Edel's mammoth biography reappeared, pared down to a mere fifth of its original bulk, apparently more easily handled, the Master at a fighting weight. Almost simultaneously there quietly emerged Tony Tanner's newest book, *Henry James: The Writer and His Work*, promising, in the author's phrase, a "brief reintroduction to Henry James for our times" (p. ix). This slim volume offers a chronological treatment of James's work, with brief synopses of the major fictions, coupled with an overview of possible critical responses to those fictions, and such minimal biographical detail as Tanner deems salient.

Despite its leanness, there is much here that the dedicated Jamesian will wonder at. One might object, first of all, to Tanner's characterizations of Olive Chancellor of *The Bostonians* as "hysterically bigoted in her commitment to 'the cause'" and unremitting in her "hysterical denunciations" of all men (pp. 52-3)—not merely because they seem to more accurately reflect Vanessa Redgrave's portrayal of Olive Chancellor than Henry James's, but because the use of the adjective "hysterical" would seem to indicate a commitment on Tanner's part, if an unconscious one, to a powerfully compromising vocabulary of the politics of sexual madness that the novel itself brings strongly into question. One might also object to Tanner's statement that James's intention in his book on Hawthorne was to "show off his own Englishness" (p. 37) in contrast to the provincialism of Americans, or to his contention that James made "a clear distinction between the artist and the observer" (p. 16), either in *Roderick Hudson* or elsewhere. But these objections, demonstrating as they do a previously acquired knowledge of the complexities of Jamesian scholarship, are not, according to Tanner, appropriate. His book, he informs us in his preface, is written in such a way that "for the Henry James specialist it will have little or no interest" (p. ix). Instead, its intended audience is the "educated reader who has read some James but is in no way a specialist" (p. ix). Given the realities of current James readership, the undergraduate student.

For the student, then, the "general reader" and others of the unwary turn, this book is a godsend. Henry James in a nutshell, cut down to a manageable size, without the annoying complications posed by James's plays, the textual revisions of the New York edition, or such embarrassments as *The Outcry*. Of course, Tanner's book is not without idiosyncrasies. His elevation of the redoubtably munching Mona Brigstock to a place in the triumvirate of feminine influence in *The Spoils of Poynton* is just sufficiently jarring to demand further thought. His reading of what can only be called James's moral vision, manifested most particularly in his treatment of *The Ambassadors*, is generous and I think wise. But such instances of bothersome originality are infrequent. For the most part, this book is thoroughly expectable. Its major divisions—there are three—correspond to the three great "phases" of James's career, and reaffirm their identity as, respectively, the treatment of the international theme, the novel of social conscience, and the indefinable culmination of novelistic endeavor in the final, "major" phase. Even the number of words Tanner devotes to any particular James text would seem to have been proportionally limited to its relative position of importance in the accepted canon of James's works. It would be difficult for the undergraduate to use this book and learn something "wrong" about Henry James, so intent is it on telling us what is "right," what we know to be true.

That this book consists largely of ratifications of accepted critical commonplaces about James is particularly disquieting in that one has come to expect from Tony Tanner the willingness to strike off on an original course, as befits an avowed champion of Thomas Pynchon. But mere disappointed expectations are not nearly as serious as the problems arising from his assertion that this book is a re-vision of Henry James "for our times." It may be true that our times are those when slimness is all, when less truly is more, including less complexity, less difficulty—and the reduction of the varieties of the Jamesian text to a few easily handled "types" (a notion that James himself played with cunningly) is welcome. Still, in the field of James studies, "our times" are those of burgeoning activity and expansion, and extensions in new and unexpected directions. Old standbys in the James canon are being turned from, in favor of a renewed interest in such "marginal" texts as *The Sacred Fount* or *The Ivory Tower*. More importantly, the impact of contemporary critical theories—structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis—on the practice of reading Henry James has produced a striking variety of new approaches to familiar texts, approaches wherein appeals to such critical crutches as the notion of "ambiguity" seem, at best, a matter of begging the question.

Naturally, such a bewildering profusion of new possibilities carries a certain risk—that of questioning what we have for so long accepted as true. For those weary of such hazards, *Henry James: The Writer and His Work* provides a welcome relief. Through its pleasantly readable style, the accessibility and almost numbing familiarity of its ideas, this book threatens to become a standard critical reference on Henry James.

Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self by Milton J. Bates. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Pp. xiii + 319. \$24.95.

When Samuel French Morse's biography of Wallace Stevens appeared in 1970, most readers were disappointed. In a pithy and tightly compressed style, Morse presented Stevens' life as it manifested itself in the poetry, but it was a far leaner cut than most readers desired. It had nothing of the juicier parts of Stevens' life that Peter Brazeau's 1983 oral biography dished out: glimpses of Stevens sinking his fingers into gooey cinnamon buns at an important meeting, dancing with the boys from the office at a stag party, breaking his hand on Hemingway's face in a fight at age 56, no less. This satisfied a hunger in Stevens aficionados to get close, not to the poet, as Morse does in his poetry as life, but to the man.

Milton J. Bates's recent book, *Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self*, offers a middle ground between these two approaches. Sharing to some extent Morse's belief that the poetry evinces the life, Bates contextualizes each stage in Stevens' poetic development so thoroughly that he convinces his readers that this literary and intellectual history is also biography. Utilizing original research in the Stevens archives (much of it previously unpublished and scattered throughout the country), he fashions a portrait of Stevens based upon the facts of Stevens' life—advice from his father on how to be successful, coursework at Harvard, marginalia, excised passages from holographs—and frames it with judicious judgment: "Stevens legend has perpetuated a false dichotomy between the businessman and the poet, one that should not survive a moment's introspection." If Bates's book can be said to fulfill Morse's promise, it can also be said to complement Brazeau's more earthy study. Concentrating on the more rarefied aspects of Stevens' life, Bates's book traces Stevens' intellectual development as it manifested itself in the complex mythology of selves that became the man.

Underlying Bates's book is a sophisticated yet unobtrusive scholarship. One feels he has read every work even tangentially pertinent to his study and put it to good use. From Stevens' high school oratorical address, he gleans Stevens' ideal of the self-made man. From Stevens' reading of John Sparrow's *Sense and Poetry*, he uncovers the hidden springs of Stevens' first public lecture, "The Irrational Element in Poetry." Bates uses Samuel Eliot Morison's *Three Centuries of Harvard* to place Stevens in the proper setting as an undergraduate, and checks *Public Opinion 1935-1946* to qualify Stevens' early liking of Mussolini. Given such an exhaustive scholarly backdrop (there are references to Emerson, Pater, Wilde, Whistler, Shaw, William James, Santayana, Mencken, *The Daily Worker*, and virtually all of Nietzsche), one shudders to think of how many false starts and dead ends Bates must have encountered on his journey.

In outlining phases in Stevens' poetic growth, Bates provides valuable background into the intellectual and cultural milieu that shaped various periods in American literary history. He begins with the influence of English aestheticism in the early part of the century (Stevens' sporting with the dandy in the pure poetry of *Harmonium*), then surveys the pull from the left in the Thirties (Stevens' weak defense of the ivory tower in *Owl's Clover*), then moves to the existentialist need to define a credible belief in the Forties

and Fifties (Stevens' grappling with major man and his affirmation of the supreme fiction).

But Bates provides a discriminating and subtle analysis of this material to shed new light on Stevens. In his discussion of the Paterian influence on the early poems, for example, he carefully notes Stevens' complicated adaptation of this source. Self-conscious of the dandical pose, Stevens wears the mask of burgher as well as clown. By placing many of the *Harmonium* poems in the *l'art pour l'art* tradition, with its emphasis on form over content, Bates clarifies many of Stevens' early works, and we can better appreciate why and how Stevens shocks the philistine middle-class out of their complacent values (one thinks immediately of "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock"). But Bates also refracts these influences through Stevens' unique sensibility to provide a more sophisticated understanding: "It is as though Stevens, having assumed the pose of aesthete, had suddenly caught sight of himself in a mirror; thereafter, his dismay and amusement became an integral part of the pose. . . . Further compounding the aesthetic dandy's self-consciousness, in Stevens' case, was his burgherly sense of his own foppish creations."

Bates maintains this skillful commentary throughout the book. Discussing the influence of Nietzsche's overman on Stevens' conception of major man, Bates shrewdly distinguishes between the two. First, he reads Stevens against himself. Although Stevens disclaims any influence by Nietzsche, Bates shows how this self-protective measure belies the facts. Like a detective on a case, he offers convincing evidence of Stevens' renewed interest in Nietzsche during the Forties: references to Nietzsche in Henry Church's letters to Stevens; invoices for special orders of Nietzsche's works that Stevens made through various booksellers; and, of course, allusions to Nietzsche in the poetry.

But if Bates successfully articulates Stevens' sense of major man as containing a Nietzschean heritage, he does not exaggerate it; he maintains his distance from the material to note that this may provide only a momentary pleasure or satisfaction. Thus he concludes one paragraph by calling Stevens' major man "the most daring and ambitious of Stevens' personae, the cynosure of his mythology of self," but begins the next with: "This is not to say that he is the most convincing of Stevens' mythic figures. Most of us read the major man poems . . . for the superlative poetry and not for the informing mythology."

Although acknowledging the contribution of recent deconstructive criticism, Bates proceeds as if the meaning of the poems can be determined, and in the process offers fruitful criticism of often discussed poems. One of the ways he succeeds is by altering the perspective. He suggests, for example, that though "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" ostensibly endorses "be," "it testifies still more eloquently to the power of 'seem.'" Or he celebrates the achievement of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" in affirming the importance of the self over the world by reversing Coleridge: "it is the infinite I am seen to be a repetition of the finite I am." He shows how the difficult logic of "The Rock" can be unraveled if the poem is read in reverse sequence.

Yet in suggesting how the emphasis in Stevens shifted in the last poems from the supreme fiction to the central imagination, Bates errs in calling the last poems impersonal: "much as Eliot effaced himself before the Supreme Being, Stevens effaced himself before supreme imagination." To many read-

ers, Stevens' last poems, like Eliot's, disclose the achievement of a personal voice, which took nearly a lifetime in both poets to realize. Poems that fill the final section of *The Rock*—"Vacancy in the Park," "The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain," "Long and Sluggish Lines," "A Quiet Normal Life," "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour," "The Rock,"—and the handful of lyrics that never made it into the *Collected Poems*—"Reality is an Activity of the Most August Imagination," "As You Leave the Room," "A Mythology Reflects Its Region"—are unself-consciously personal. Like Ariel in "The Planet on the Table," Stevens could say,

[He] was glad he had written his poems.
They were of a remembered time
Or of something seen that he liked.
.....

It was not important that they survive.
What mattered was that they should bear
Some lineament or character,

Some affluence, if only half-perceived,
In the poverty of their words,
Of the planet of which they were part.

Benefiting perhaps from Brazeau's telling depiction of Stevens' unhappy marriage and fractured home life, Bates establishes the importance of Stevens' wife to his poetry, both in the beginning as inspiring muse and later as transmogrified interior paramour. Robert Buttel, in his *Making of Harmonium*, has done much to reveal the influence of the "Little June Book" on Stevens' early published poetry. But Bates offers an enticing interpretation when he suggests that the later emotional estrangement became itself a source of desire. Thus, Elsie becomes seminal to Stevens' poetry "both in the winning and in the losing." One thinks immediately of "Arrival at the Waldorf," "Where the wild poem is a substitute / For the woman one loves or ought to love," but Bates offers even more poignant autobiographical evidence. In a letter to Ronald Lane Latimer, Stevens enclosed the following unpublished poem:

The cold wife lay with her husband after his death,
His ashen reliquiae contained in gold
Under her pillow, on which he had never slept.

Bates observes: "Stevens ventured no explanation of these lines, which he entitled simply 'The Widow.' But he may have provided a clue to their private meaning in the unusual word 'reliquiae,' which he used to describe some of his own poems in a letter written to Latimer about this time." It is such observations as these, and the following, which refers to the time Elsie spent in Reading even after their marriage, that make Bates rewarding: "If Elsie touched the springs of romance in Stevens, she also touched his longing for a native land, the thing he would call 'reality' in his later work."

When fellow-workers complained that they did not understand his poetry,

Stevens—who could address the sky as his “blue lady” and see an angel surrounded by countrymen in a still life by Tal Coat—would remark that they were too literal minded. Clearly, Stevens would admire the style of Bates’s book, for, in addition to an impeccable command of the language, Bates has a naturally metaphoric mind. Describing the young Stevens at Harvard preoccupied with the dueling claims of art and life, Bates writes: “As a young dog worrying the old *fin de siècle* bones of contention, Stevens was preparing to sink his teeth into the sinewy matter of imagination and reality.” He categorizes Stevens’ estranged relationship with his wife as a faulty algebraic equation, with “two variables and no constants,” and concludes that in the relationship, “there were gremlins but no villains. [Stevens] was betrayed less by Elsie than by his own imagination; she was betrayed more by insecurity than by her spouse.” Finally, in one of his most felicitous and sensitive moments, he says of Stevens’ death-bed conversion to Roman Catholicism: “It was as though [Stevens] had stepped bodily into his own 1952 poem, ‘To an Old Philosopher in Rome.’” Such is the impress of this book that, fortunately for us, one could say the same thing of Milton J. Bates’s *Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self*.

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John N. Serio

Why Nietzsche Now? ed. Daniel O’Hara. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. Pp. xii + 441. \$27.50.

Nietzsche: Life as Literature by Alexander Nehamas. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. Pp. x + 261. \$17.95.

Why Nietzsche now? The most obvious answer offered by the volume of 1981 essays from *boundary 2* recently reprinted by Indiana University Press is that Nietzsche threatens the firm distinction between literature and philosophy that contemporary literary theory also seeks to unsettle. Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man serve as the tutelary gods of this volume, with Nietzsche read either as their precursor or deconstructed along the lines their work suggests.

A reader interested in a capsule history of the last twenty-five years of American literary criticism could find it here by beginning with Martin Heidegger’s quixotic attempt to prove that “what to common sense looks like [Nietzsche’s] ‘atheism,’ and has to look like it, is at bottom the very opposite” (p. 38). After Heidegger’s restoration of Being’s priority, the deluge. J. Hillis Miller’s reading of “Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” succinctly introduces “the impotence of both author and reader” (p. 52) within the Derridean world of the text. “This dangerous incoherence is repeated by the reader of Nietzsche’s essay. An interpretation of it can never be clear or complete. The laws of forgetting and self-mutilation apply to any reader as well as to the author” (p. 52). Joseph Riddel ties the modernist poetics of Pound, Crane, and Stevens to literary theory’s recent insistence that all uses of language are figural and rhetorical from the start, while Rodolphe Gasché’s es-

say on *Ecce Homo* provides an object lesson in the Post-Derridean approach to philosophy. For Gasché, "eternal recurrence" situates itself between the traditional philosophical concepts of "being" and "becoming," disrupting both while never serving as a concept itself, but only existing by virtue of its performance in the text. Our quick tour of criticism ends with Jonathan Arac's attack on both the traditional "aesthetes" of literary criticism and on Paul de Man for their neglect of "history," signalling the current resurgence of interest in the temporal and cultural contexts of literary texts.

Arac's essay might lead us to conclude that deconstruction's day is over, and that Nietzsche the genealogist now takes center stage from the Nietzsche who claims there are no facts, only interpretations. But then a book like Alexander Nehamas' *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* comes along to remind us that Nietzsche the anti-metaphysician still scandalizes philosophers; literary theory will remain unable to resist examining the rhetorical bases of other disciplines—with Nietzsche as a guide—if those disciplines persist in the uncritical repetition of their constituting premises. To be cynical, or perhaps just Nietzschean, the other disciplines offer too invitingly simple targets to be ignored.

Nehamas has read his Derrida and Deleuze, but has not grasped their point(s). His project is traditionally philosophical: the evaluation of Nietzsche's thought according to its logic, consistency, unity, and coherence. The paradigm of logic remains sacrosanct; Nehamas assumes that Nietzsche struggles to make his ideas logically coherent (and thus persuasive) and understands his own task as identifying where Nietzsche succeeds and where, regrettably, he fails. Nehamas manages (by the end of a book that is twice as long as it need be) to construct a Nietzsche he claims is almost perfectly consistent. This Nietzsche occupies a radically individualist (or perspectivist) position. His objections to morality, religion, metaphysics, and modern science are not to their content, but to their "dogmatic" presentation of their viewpoint as "objective truth." In place of such dogmatism, Nietzsche "say[s] that to create oneself is the most important goal in life" (pp. 233–34), and his texts should be read as his personal enactment of that self-creation. "Nietzsche's presentation of this character [i.e., himself] is perfectly consistent with his perspectivism, which does not forbid that views be developed and accepted but which dictates that they always be presented as views of one's own" (p. 230). Meet the libertarian, tolerant Nietzsche. He approves of all actions so long as you have truly chosen them for yourself, and his philosophy exists to persuade you to exercise such control over your life.

The benefits of such an interpretation are obvious. All kinds of embarrassing details can be dismissed. Nietzsche's lyrical paeans to cruelty, for example, only mean that cruelty was appropriate for barbaric nobles, not that Nietzsche recommends cruelty to us. Nehamas offers a Nietzsche shorn of all content; only the form is left. In other words, Nehamas "aestheticizes" Nietzsche, as he quite explicitly acknowledges. And his book allows us to recognize the affinity between logic and aesthetics. Nehamas insists that perspectivism does not entail "that every view is as good as every other" (p. 198). His criteria for evaluating different interpretations are necessarily formal, and he calls them "aesthetic," but they seem traditionally logical to me. The similarity stems from the fact that logic and aesthetics are both self-

enclosed systems. Hence, consistency, simplicity, elegance, etc. function to justify judgments of better or worse.

Nehamas embraces the "aesthetic" just as literary criticism, goaded by the new Nietzscheans, is abandoning it. He offers a Nietzsche untainted by the less pleasant consequences of the will to power. Aesthetics and/or logic allow the judgment of philosophical positions and literary texts according to unchanging and transcendent principles. But the notion of will to power suggests that all philosophy, all art, and all interpretations will be generated by the specific desires and interests of their creator, and that the only criteria for discerning a "better" interpretation will be success. Nehamas' libertarian version of Nietzsche neglects the fact that selves live in close society with one another; individual interpretations often aim to influence others or reflect others' influence on the self. Self-creation without imposition on others could only occur in a vacuum—and Nietzsche never imagined himself in a vacuum. Judgment of others' ideas and actions is neither abstract (formal) nor disinterested; such judgments respond to the concrete particulars of a position and involve an acceptance of or resistance to that position's influence on the self. Our own interpretations aim to change not merely ourselves but others as well, and which interpretations succeed in this aim is a matter of power.

We need not take power to mean simply brute force. Nietzsche makes it abundantly clear that the noble's strength can not match the priest's cunning. Logical consistency can prove powerfully persuasive. But no criteria transcend this power play, this endless and endlessly changing (hence genealogy) rhetorical attempt to influence others. Literary theory's acceptance of this Nietzschean view results, I think, in a vital shift in emphasis in the evaluation of philosophical arguments. Rather than working from formal criteria as Nehamas and traditional philosophers do, the new rhetoricians tend to consider a position's consequences and its probable motives. For example, literary theory will ask why Nehamas wants so much to prove Nietzsche is a respectable philosopher, and proceed to focus on the authority attaching to great names in the philosophical tradition and the need to incorporate within that tradition a figure so prominent as Nietzsche, who challenges its very integrity.

Most striking about Nehamas' recuperative effort is the length to which he goes to demonstrate that Nietzsche really is not the threatening and outrageous figure many take him to be. But, surely, even if Nehamas successfully domesticates Nietzsche, he will not lay to rest the troubling ideas wrongfully (according to him) attributed to Nietzsche. The authoritative magic of the name makes him miss his target here. A far better course, it seems to me, is to fully accept the radical positions Nietzsche take on various issues and to consider whether or not, on the grounds of persuasiveness and consequences, we wish to accept those positions. In the two best and most important essays in *Why Nietzsche Now?* Paul Bové and Charles Altieri do just that. Both authors are concerned, like Nehamas, with the character Nietzsche creates in his texts. But the literary critics emphasize the enactment of an "oppositional" stance. Bové sees Nietzsche as presenting "the heroism of the sublime conscientious intellectual" (p. 374), a figure who quickly becomes "encoded" and reemerges in the work of Foucault and Said among others.

But Bové insists that Nietzsche avoids mere egomaniacal staging of himself as "the perfect man" by subordinating "seriousness, anger, [and] personal interest" to "comedy" (p. 376). Only a "comic" (a better word here might be "ironic") relation to the western humanistic tradition can avoid the "ascetic nihilism" that "constantly extends its hegemony under the guise of respectability, of morality" (p. 385). Bové illustrates the dangers of a non-comic use of Nietzsche by arguing that Said's *Orientalism* remains bound to the rules of the discourse it aims to oppose.

If Bové finds Nietzsche's irony absolutely essential, Altieri claims it is self-defeating. The ironic askesis, which aims to establish the self's independence from tradition and culture, must be endlessly enacted, and its repetition finally serves as a pathetic indication that the vaunted independence has not been achieved. The staging of alternatives, Altieri argues, must inevitably take place within culture, and the energy diverted to the continual performance of the self's uniqueness would be better employed in trying "to live out ideals which can bear the scrutiny of self-reflective life. Ideals must be articulated in a context of communal norms" (p. 410).

The line between philosophy and literature dissolves when texts are read in relation to the issues that inform our own practice as writers. Undoubtedly, such readings are partial and informed by partisan polemics, but surely such reinterpretations of Nietzsche come closer to his notion that all discourse is situated in specific and "interested" contexts than Nehamas' attempt to render Nietzsche's "philosophy" whole, consistent—and antiseptic.

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